

ADDICTIONS IN THE FAMILY

▼ If someone you love has an addiction

Thousands of Missourians have a loved one that is impaired by Drug or Alcohol addiction. Missouri's most recent needs assessment indicates 492,000 Missourians age 12 or older have alcohol or drug problems that need intervention or treatment. (*Status Report 1-2002*) Addiction is a chronic, progressive, disease that is often fatal if untreated. People naturally want to try and help the ones they love overcome such a devastating life problem and addiction does respond to treatment, so what can you do to help your loved one? Attempting to help someone you love overcome their addiction is a difficult and challenging task. Many family members who attempt to help are actually mistakenly enabling the addiction to get worse. However ignoring the problem is obviously not the solution. Addiction responds to early recognition, intervention and treatment.

▼ Get Involved

The person with an addiction often cannot see the addiction as clearly as an outsider can. Therefore they do need someone to get involved, to talk about the problem honestly and openly and to give them feedback. Preaching doesn't help and neither does talking to the person when they are under the influence. The feedback needs to be direct, specific and behavioral. For instance, "Last night you came home late and drunk and missed Bobby's birthday party, he was very disappointed and I was worried".

▼ Don't take their pain away

The person with addiction will usually not develop motivation to change without some pain. Luckily the natural consequences of addiction cause pain, therefore you don't have to create extra. However you do have to get out of the way of the pain and let the person you love feel it. This is one area that many people have trouble with. It's hard to stand back and let someone you love suffer. We often want to take their pain away. Just keep in mind if you take their pain away you take their motivation to change away. Therefore do not cover up, make excuses or in any way shield them from the natural consequences of their behavior. Do not allow yourself to take responsibility, or feel guilty for the loved one's behavior.

▼ Get help for yourself

Discuss the problem with someone you trust that has specific training or experience with alcohol and drug addiction. Develop a support system for yourself. Al-Anon/Alateen is a 12 step support group specifically for anyone who feels they have been affected by another's alcohol abuse. Similarly Nar-Anon is for those affected by

another's drug addiction. These support groups are more about helping you than helping the person with the addiction. You may want to seek professional help for yourself from an addiction counselor, addiction treatment program, social worker, or psychologist.

▼ **Do Not**

Preach
Punish
Threaten
Bribe
Try to make them feel guilty
Cover or make excuses for them
Take over their responsibilities
Hide or throw away their Alcohol or Drugs
Argue with them when they are drunk or high
Drink along with them
Take drugs along with them
Feel guilty or responsible for their behavior
Allow threats to health or safety

▼ **Do**

Stay calm
Talk about the behaviors
Hold them accountable
Get help for yourself
Learn about addiction
Join a support group
Talk to someone you trust
Maintain a healthy home
Involvement in family activities
Encourage new leisure interests
Take one day at a time
Accept setbacks and relapses
Call the police

▼ **For More information, Phone**

ADA-800-575-7480

▼ **Websites**

Al-Anon/Alateen http://www.al-anon.org/alalist_usa.html

ADA <http://www.modmh.state.mo.us/ada/>

▼ **Fact sheets**

Involuntary Detoxification

Addiction

CPS Involuntary Civil Detention

<http://www.modmh.state.mo.us/cps/civil/cdindex.htm>

CPS Guide for Law enforcement

<http://www.modmh.state.mo.us/cps/guidelaw/glindex.htm>

If someone close...has a problem with alcohol or other drugs.

<http://www.health.org/govpubs/ph317/>



For more information,
contact the
Missouri Department of
Mental Health,
Division of
Alcohol and Drug Abuse
P.O. Box 687
1706 East Elm
Jefferson City, MO 65102
573-751-4942
or 1-800-364-9687
modmh.state.mo.us

